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KREMLIN PERMITS FOREIGNERS TO TRAVEL ON SOVIET SHIPS

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According to a recent Kremlin regulation, foreigners are again permitted to travel on Soviet ships either within or outside USSR territory.

After a 6-year interruption, the Soviet Black Sea Steamship Company and the Baltic Steamship Company have recently granted passage to non-Russian passengers on Soviet ships traveling between Black Sea and Mediterranean ports and between Leningrad and London.

The most modern Soviet passenger ships, such as the motor vessels Yakutiya, Rossiya, Ukraina, Vyacheslav Molotov and the SS Ilich, SS Iobeda, SS Petr Velikiy and other express liners, which compete with Western ships in luxury and comfort, are listed on the above-mentioned shipping companies' summer schedules ending 1 November 1953.

According to the Moscow press the Yakutiya and other Soviet ships docked in May and June 1953 at several important Mediterranean ports, such as Naples and Genoa, at ports of the French Riviera, at Marseilles, and at the North African ports of Oran, Algiers, and Tunis.

In the elegant drawing rooms of the Soviet ships, almost all West European languages are spoken. However, one rarely hears Russian spoken in the drawing rooms, since Soviet citizens spend their time either on deck, in the gymnasium, or in the ships' swimming pools.

Since Soviet passengers have very little foreign currency, they can afford to buy only cheap souvenirs. Whenever the ships dock in a foreign port, very few of them go ashore; they stand on deck and curiously watch the crowds gathered on the pier.

Soviet citizens are accorded the same treatment as the foreigners. The authorized newspaper and book stand (Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga, International Book) is the only place aboard ship where rubles are accepted from foreigners.

The ships' drawing rooms have modern steel furniture and oriental rugs. The dining rooms, equipped with fine silverware, china, and crystal, serve the most select French and Italian cuisine and Russian delicacies such as black caviar and old Armenian Ararat cognac. The foreign passengers are seated apart from the Russians. Waiters and porters speak French and English fluently.

Travel on these Soviet ships is 20 to 25 percent cheaper than on other luxury liners traveling the same routes. No attempts are made to involve the passengers in politics, as on the ships traveling within Soviet territory. Soviet passengers and crew members can listen to Soviet news reports and other Soviet radio broadcasts in a corner of the ship designated for this purpose.

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